The vestures, powers, mind, and reason move in their paths under the pure consciousness of the Self, as people move in the sunshine. —*Shankaracharya*

THEOSOPHY

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THE DARK GLASS OF EVENTS

A SUSTAINED exercise of the imagination is needed to gain a realizing sense of the perspective on human affairs belonging to adepts and perfected men. In a long sentence occupying more than half a page of *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge gives a comprehensive account of the knowledge of these beings, calling them "the bearers of the torch of truth across the ages." He says that "they have stood by the cradle of nations and seen the vast achievements of the ancients, watched sadly the decay of those who had no power to resist the cyclic rise and fall." As we now live in the midst of a decline, the concurrent rise, although not unapparent, seems to us uncertain and tremulous, while the fall is intimately affecting lives of an increasing number. It is natural, therefore, to wish that signs of a growing understanding of the meaning and purpose of life were more in evidence.

Yet if we go back to what Mr. Judge has said on the same page (4), we find the present characterized as "an age of transition," when "every system of thought, science, religion, government, and society is changing, and men's minds are only preparing for an alteration into that state which will permit the race to advance to the point suitable for these elder brothers to introduce their actual presence to our sight." It seems inevitable, then, that as we look at the current scene, we shall see first the breakdowns which are a necessary beginning of the change, and often be unable to recognize how they are also "preparations." It seems well to note that Mr. Judge speaks of these changes as *only* preparations—providing

clearance, we might say, for the great alteration into a state allowing the actual presence of true teachers among us. The passage of sufficient time is also a factor unknown to us. No schedule is provided, since this, given the presently dominant qualities of human nature, would doubtless be subversive of the growth required to make their coming possible. Already the shadowy world of pretended occultism has dozens of time-tables and advents to offer to a believing public, and the vulnerable inquirer could hardly be subjected to a worse confusion of claims.

The counsel of the teachers we know about is to find strength in the philosophy, not in signs, although the capacity to read the signs correctly may be developed in due course. And the strength needed is already ours, if we take to heart the conceptions of Karma and reincarnation, making these doctrines an illumination of daily affairs. One need not be entirely caught up in the sweep of events. In the perspective of reincarnation, history becomes a study of the works and migration of souls, with nations and races but the temporal habitations of great streams of egos out of the past. From the promontory of thought these teachings afford, the horizons of a single life are no more marked off "by birth and death"; our lives are seen as way stations in a larger cycle of experience which includes ancient civilizations as well as this one, and reaches into a future beyond calculation. The slings and arrows of an already shaped destiny may continue to strike, the news still report the ruthlessness of states and the malfeasance of heads of states, making commonplace the betrayal of responsibility: nothing external may seem changed, save the pace of moral disintegration; but a grasp of even the theory of the doctrine of cycles goes far to lessen the psychic impact of all these appalling signs of the time. It is truly a gift of the gods that enables one to see in the enterprises of merchants, the wars of soldiers, even in brief prosperities and succeeding mishaps and declines, neither triumph nor disaster, nor even a dull, meaningless unrolling of cultural reflexes, but the slow working out of natural if hidden plans of human development.

Things are not what they seem, and seldom can be. Especially is this so during Kali Yuga, the time of "confusion," when values are inverted, labels are misleading, and men of the highest virtue are unhonored and by choice remain unknown. "It would be subversive of the ends they have in view were they to make themselves public in the present civilization, which is based almost wholly on

money, fame, glory, and personality." Yet come they do, at the appropriate time, although by special arrangement, and in mutually protective masquerade. They do their work in the world, as Mr. Judge says, "when cyclic law permits." What is that work? It is, he says, to seek for opportunities of drawing the developing intelligence of the race to consider the great truths concerning the destiny of the soul.

Men think themselves confined by their times. Today the untrammeled freedom remembered by older generations has given way to numberless legal entanglements and economic encumbrances. People feel weighted down by what seems the unavoidable apparatus of their lives, and see almost a malice in the hammer blows of unpleasant events. Flaws appear in the best laid plans, as though all the habitual petty egotisms of the past had now begun to mar even casual undertakings. Nothing that men do seems to come out well, any more, as might be expected to result from systematic extension of the playtime and pleasure-seeking of adolescence far into the age of responsibility. Signs of hurt and disappointment appear in the eyes of grown men and women who sadly wonder what has gone wrong with their lives. Exemptions from the common lot are few, since only the coarse-grained and aggressive can feel at home in these unpropitious and unlovely circumstances.

Yet it is still true that life would be a contest of smiles if we all knew our business. A beginning is made by realizing that however grim the face of current events, no matter how snarling the "crowd" aspect of world affairs, even the worst that can happen is not the doom of either nation or race, and that cycles filled with surface discouragement can represent the mounting of new tendencies as well as the exhaustion of old Karmic lines. What we see all around us is entirely consistent with the statement of H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*: "In our present all-material Fifth Race, the earthly Spirit of the Fourth is still strong in us; but we are approaching the time when the pendulum of evolution will direct its swing decidedy upwards, bringing Humanity back on a parallel line with the primitive third Root-Race in Spirituality." (I, 224-5.)

The task of practical application will remain with us until the day when there will be no difference between what we know and what we do, or no distinction between theory and practice—when knowing *means* being. In the meantime, application is the testing

ground of knowledge. Mr. Judge speaks of the age of "transition" and says that "every system" of thought, and all social institutions, are changing. Have we supposed that such far-reaching alterations in the way people think, in the way they live, in the things they depend upon, can proceed without personal pain or disaster for those to whom the changes are frightening and unwelcome? When cyclic change is met by fear and opposition, emotional pressures are generated which loom far greater in immediate importance than the processes of change themselves. Issues are certain to be blurred if such tensions exist, and the side-taking which results can hardly represent clear moral decision. What is wanted, in such tumultuous intervals of history, is not so much a choice of the right alignment as a higher, more inclusive perspective on all such contests and conjunctions. Ideally speaking, not until the far-off confrontation of the "moment of choice" can there be reflected in the affairs of men on earth the clear-cut issues which are symbolized in the Mahabharata—and we might remember that even the ideal warrior, that best of all disciples, Arjuna, found himself badly confused as to where his duty lay.

The movement of mankind toward that hour of ultimate decision is long and painstaking. There are many intermediate stages to be understood and surmounted. Something of their character may be gleaned from a consideration of the effort of the teachers in the past to instruct various peoples and races in "the great truths concerning the destiny of the soul." The best record of their work is doubtless found in the philosophies and religions of the East, so extensively used by H.P.B. Mr. Judge speaks of the "first pure and undebased form of the Mysteries of Greece" as another example. The mark of the teachers upon history is found everywhere, although endlessly varied by the inroads of time and human imperfection. But to follow up and become familiar with what is known of only those named in the first chapter of the *Ocean* would be an undertaking of many years' duration. Fortunately, having Theosophy, we do not find this necessary, since ample access to the essentials of their contributions—which change according to man's evolutionary requirements—is obtained through the works of H. P. Blavatsky. Yet reflection on the general themes emphasized by these teachers may give insight into psycho-moral forces and situations which had much to do with the shaping of past historical epochs. Indeed, a review of the work of the great teachers of the

past might provide a treatise elaborating on what Madame Blavatsky says concerning distinctively human evolution:

> The evolution of the GOD-IDEA proceeds apace with man's own intellectual evolution. So true it is that the noblest ideal to which the religious Spirit of one age can soar, will appear but a gross caricature to the philosophic mind in a succeeding epoch! The philosophers themselves had to be *initiated into perceptive mysteries*, before they could grasp the correct idea of the ancients in relation to this most metaphysical subject. Otherwise—outside such initiation—for every thinker there will be a "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther," mapped out by his intellectual capacity, as clearly and as unmistakably as there is for the progress of any nation or race in its cycle by the law of Karma. Outside of initiation, the ideals of contemporary religious thought must always have their wings clipped and remain unable to soar higher; for idealistic as well as realistic thinkers, and even free-thinkers, are but the outcome and the natural product of their respective environments and periods. The ideals of both are only the necessary results of their temperaments, and the outcome of that phase of intellectual progress to which a nation, in its collectivity, has attained. (*S.D.* I, 326-27.)

There are various statements concerning the stimulus given to thought through help to "rare individuals," sometimes scientists, sometimes philosophers, writers, and others who are open and able to receive inspiration from higher planes. What is said about these influences—sometimes coming as great ideas, as with Thomas Paine, sometimes as sublime mystical conceptions and illuminations, as with Boehme, and sometimes through actual embodied redeemers—"There is not a religion worthy of the name which has been started otherwise than in consequence of such *visits* from Beings on the higher planes"—makes it possible to conceive, at least in outline, of the world as a vast school of souls, all pursuing their evolution and salvation, both singly and together, in collaboration and in behalf of one another, all learning the lessons which the long succession of cycles affords. Mr. Judge's image of a "Theosophical map" which reveals the presence of high spiritual longing and effort to know the truth in particular individuals, may amplify this conception, as will also H.P.B.'s remark in passing, in "Chelas and Lay Chelas," that there are rare individuals who by their determination and qualifications compel the attention of those beyond the snowy range.

All history, considered in this light, becomes the complex record of the striving of souls in evolution, reflecting both their progress and their failures, and, in recent centuries, both the driving energy of Atlantean restlessness and genius as well as the intensifying vicissitudes of Kali Yuga. Karma and reincarnation, philosophically considered and applied, bring into play all these factors of egoic development, throwing into high relief the larger significance of the periodic incarnation of great teachers who know the truth about man's inner development and possibilities. These teachers give what instruction they can to place the process of spiritual awakening and growth within the field of man's general awareness, so that there can be the acceptance of responsibility on the part of an increasing number of the human race. For this, surely, is the meaning of a further incarnation of Manas.

THE APPLICATION OF FIRST-HAND TRUTH

It is futile to accept revelations on anybody's say-so. They convey no knowledge, and it is actual knowledge that is required by each one. Shibboleths and formulas are mere words, not a criterion of truth.

Theosophy is in the world to present the means by which each one can acquire knowledge for himself. Its study and application call forth the judgment and discrimination latent in the man himself.

Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement. The nature of Truth is *universal*: its possessors in any degree will be found to be appliers of universality in thought, speech and action. Their efforts will be for humanity regardless of sex, creed, caste or color. They will never be found among those claiming to be the chosen spokesman of the Deity—and exacting homage from their fellow-men: true Brotherhood includes the least developed as well as the very highest. We must seek to give aid to *all* in search of truth. Our value and aid in this great work will be just what we make them by our motive, our judgment, our conduct.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

FROM "THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM"

On Dreams

In the Path *it is stated that "a dream is the going out of a part of our principles into the Astral Light." This raises a desire for information relative to the inspiration—so-called—of poets, artists, inventors, and others.*

W.Q.J.—The definition of a dream referred to is not to my mind adequate, for there are many sorts of dreams all due to different causes. Believing, as I do, that in the Astral Light are the pictures of all that man has ever done or made, and that at this stage of evolution it is not possible to bring forth anything really new, the so-called inspirations may often be due to the fact that the organism of those "inspired" more easily permits the influx of the pictures in the Astral Light, and then their production in verse, paintings, inventions, or what not. In an article entitled "Genius" by H. P. Blavatsky in *Lucifer* for November, 1889, the idea is advanced that the great geniuses, of whatever kind, are examples of the Ego, which is all-knowing, shining through and informing the physical body inhabited. It is not necessary to dream in order to be inspired, for the sudden inrush of poetical ideas and of new inventions may be due wholly to the previous state of the organism. While we often hear of such ideas arising in dream, yet from what is known of the poets, painters, and others, we are forced to the conclusion that the greater number of inspirations are during the waking state, and this supports the view put forward by H. P. Blavatsky in the article upon "Genius."

Is it possible by a strong desire before sleep to receive from the Higher Self in dream an answer to questions respecting right thought and conduct?

W.Q.J.—This question is one of deep importance to those who are in earnest. My answer to it would be "yes." Bulwer Lytton says, in the "Strange Story," that man's first initiation comes in dreams. In the Book of Job it is written (c. iv, 12.13): "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when *deep* sleep falleth on

men." And (c.xxxiii, 14): "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, *when deep sleep falleth upon men*, in slumberings upon the bed." The state spoken of in Job is the same as that called *Sushupti* by the Hindus. Man has three principal states or conditions—waking, dreaming, and dreamless or deep slumber. In the last it is held that communion is enjoyed with the Spirit, and that the inner man returning or changing from that condition goes into a dream, short or long, from which he changes into the waking state. The influences of *Sushupti* are highly spiritual. They are common to all men. The greatest villain on the earth, as well as the most virtuous man, goes into Sushupti and receives benefit from it. If it were not so, wickedness would triumph in the earth through the overpowering influence of the body and its constant downward tendency. Now, if this is believed and the reality of the Higher Self admitted, it follows from what is called *the mysterious power of meditation* that a sincerely devoted man who earnestly calls upon the Higher Self for aid in right conduct will receive in the dream state that succeeds the condition of Sushupti the aid asked for. In other words, one can make the dream impressions received out of the highest—or Sushupti—state more clear and valuable than is usual with those who think nothing about it. But the questions asked and impressions desired must be high and altruistic, because the Higher Self has no concern with material things nor with any temporal affairs. This power will of course vary with each man according to his nature and the various combinations between his physical, astral, and psychical planes.

If while in the present incarnation we are able to arrive at the "free" spiritual condition, the great reality, as designated in the tract "Spirituality," when during the long interval between reincarnations, while the spirit is not chained to the body, but experiences that unreal state "sleep, a sleep of dreams"—as stated in "Lucifer," what progress is made?

W.Q.J.—There is much confusion in this question, and hence I infer a similar state in the mind of the questioner as to the matter propounded. Two states or kinds of development are mixed together, one the free or liberated state of a Jivan-mukta, and the other that of a being who is obliged to reincarnate. Only those are free who are Jivanmuktas; having reached that state they are no

more confined to mortal birth, but may take up a body or not as they see fit. A Jivanmukta participates in the souls of all creatures and works for the good of the human family. To take a known case, it should be remembered that the Adept who is helping the T.S. is a Jivanmukta, but is all the time engaged in the great work of assisting the great orphan, Humanity. And it is thought by some that he is waiting for the time to come when the races have reached a higher state of development, and he can reincarnate as some great personage to carry on the work now begun.

It could not therefore be possible that, having reached the liberated or free state referred to, there should be any "long interval between reincarnations," or any interval at all; and thus the question "What progress is made?" is a *non sequitur* which needs no other specific reply.

If by "that unreal state sleep, a sleep of dreams," is meant the state of devachan, the answer is that he who is liberated does not experience devachan, since that is a state possible only while one is still subject to delusion.

But on examining the tract on Spirituality I do not find the statement made which the questioner quotes. I must infer, then, that some lesser, lower view of "free" and "spiritual" states was in the mind of the person, some idea that one might in this present incarnation reach to the state of Jivanmukta, and that one who is free could still be obliged to reincarnate. From having referred to an intermediate state of sleep and dream, such might be inferred to be the case. But a study of the philosophical basis of all these Theosophical ideas would prevent such confusion as I have attempted to point out and to cure. Indeed, on the third page of the very tract spoken of, on line 19 *et seq.* I find a direct claim that we are really only aspiring to the state referred to, and that we can begin now that training which shall lead us up to the heights on which the liberated stand. No reference at all is made to "long intermediate periods of reincarnation."

(Questions and answers included in this installment are reprinted from the following issues of the *Theosophical Forum*, in this sequence: November, 1889; December, 1889; July, 1890.)

IS HEREDITY A PUZZLE?

A WELL known writer in *Harper's Magazine* said lately, "Heredity is a Puzzle." He then proceeded, "The race is linked together in a curious tangle, so that it is almost impossible to fix the responsibility. * * * We try to study this problem in our asylums and prisons, and we get a great many interesting facts, but they are too conflicting to guide legislation. The difficulty is to relieve a person of responsibility for the sins of his ancestors, without relieving him of responsibility for his own sins."

This is the general view. Heredity is a puzzle, and will always remain one so long as the laws of Karma and Reincarnation are not admitted and taken into account in all these investigations. Nearly all of these writers admit—excepting those who say they do not know—the theological view that each human being is a new creation, a new soul projected into life on this earth.

This is quite logical, inasmuch as they assert that we are only mortal and are not spirits. The religious investigators admit we are spirits, but go no further, except to assume the same special creation. Hence, when they come to the question of "Heredity," it is a very serious matter. It becomes a puzzle, especially to those who investigate heredity and who are trying to decide on whom responsibility ought to rest, while they know nothing of Karma or Reincarnation. And it is hinted at that there is necessity for legislation on the subject. That is to say, if we have a case of a murderer to consider, and we find that he has come of a race or family of murderers, the result of which is to make him a being who cannot prevent himself from committing murder, we have to conclude that, if this is due to "heredity," he cannot in any sane sense be responsible.

Take the case of the tribes, or family, or sect of Thugs in India, whose aim in life was to put people out of the world. Their children would of necessity inherit this tendency. It is something like a cat and a bird. It is the nature of the cat to eat the bird, and you cannot blame it. Thus we should be driven to pass a law making an exception in the case of such unfortunate persons. Then we should be met by the possibility of false testimony being adduced

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NOTE.—This article was first printed by William Q. Judge in the *Path* for November, 1888.

upon the trial of the criminal, going to show that he came under the law. This possibility is so great that it is not likely such a law will ever be passed. So that, even if the legal and scientific world were able to come to any conclusion establishing the great force of heredity, it would be barren of results unless the truth of Karma and Reincarnation were admitted. For in the absence of these, no law, and hence no remedy for the supposed injustice to be done to irresponsible criminals, could be applied. I am stating, not what I think ought to be done, but what will be the inevitable end of investigation into heredity without the aid of the other two great laws.

If these two doctrines should be accepted by the supposed legislators, it would follow that no such law as I have adverted to would ever be put on the books; for the reason that, once Karma and Reincarnation are admitted, the responsibility of each individual is made greater than before. Not only is he responsible even under his hereditary tendency, but in a wider sense he is also responsible for the great injury he does the State through the future effect of his life—that effect acting on those who are born as his descendants.

There is no very great puzzle in "Heredity" as a law, from the standpoint of Karma and Reincarnation, although of course the details of the working of it will be complicated and numerous.

I know that some theosophists have declared that it puzzles them, but that is because it is a new idea, very different from those instilled into us during our education as youths and our association with our fellows as adults.

None of the observed and admitted facts in respect to heredity should be ignored, nor need they be left out of sight by a Theosophist. We are bound to admit that leanings and peculiarities are transmitted from father to son, and to all along down the line of descent. In one case we may find a mental trait, in another a physical peculiarity; and in a great-grandson we shall see often the bodily habits of his remote ancestor reproduced.

The question is then asked, "How am I to be held responsible for such strange inclinations when I never knew this man from whom I inherit them?" As theories go at this day, it would be impossible to answer this question. For if I have come from the bosom of God as a new soul; or if what is called soul or intelligence is the product of this body I inhabit and which I had no hand in

producing; or if I have come from far distant spheres unconnected with this earth, to take up this body with whose generation I was not concerned; it would be the grossest injustice for me to be held responsible for what it may do. It seems to me that from the premises laid down there can be no escape from this conclusion, and unless our sociologists and political economists and legislators admit the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, they will have to pass laws to which I have referred. We shall then have a code which may be called, "Of limitations of responsibility of criminals in cases of murder and other crimes."

But the whole difficulty arises from the *inherited transmitted* habit in the Western mind of looking at effects and mistaking them for causes, and of considering the instruments or means, through and by means of which laws of nature work, as causes. Heredity has been looked at, or is beginning to be, as the cause of crime and of virtue. It is not a cause, but only the means or instrument for the production of the effect, the cause being hidden deeper. It seems just as erroneous to call heredity a cause of either good or bad acts as it is to call the merely mortal brain or body the cause of mind or soul.

Ages ago the Hindu sages admitted that the body did not produce the mind, but that there was what they called "the mind of the mind," or, as we might put it, "the intelligence operating above and behind the mere brain matter." And they enforced their argument by numerous illustrations; as, for instance, that the eye could not see even when in itself a perfect instrument, unless the mind behind it was acting. We can easily prove this from cases of sleepwalkers. They walk with their eyes wide open, so that the retina must, as usual, receive the impinging images, yet although you stand before their eyes they do not see you. It is because the intelligence is disjoined from the otherwise perfect optical instrument. Hence we admit that the body is not the cause of mind; the eyes are not the cause of sight; but that the body and the eye are instruments by means of which the cause operates.

Karma and Reincarnation include the premise that *the man* is a spiritual entity who is using the body for some purpose.

From remote times the sages state that he (this spiritual being) is using the body which he has acquired by Karma. Hence the responsibility cannot be placed upon the body, nor primarily upon

those who brought forth the body, but upon the *man himself*. This works perfect justice, for, while the man in any one body is suffering his just deserts, the other men (or souls) who produced such bodies are also compelled to make compensation in other bodies.

As the compensation is not made at any human and imperfect tribunal, but to nature itself, which includes every part of it, it consists in the restoration of the harmony or equilibrium which has been disturbed.

The necessity for recognizing the law from the standpoint of ethics arises from the fact that, until we are aware that such is the law, we will never begin to perform such acts and think such thoughts as will tend to bring about the required alterations in the astral light needed to start a new order of thoughts and influences. These new influences will not, of course, come to have full effect and sway on those who initiate them, but will operate on their descendants, and will also prepare a new future age in which those very persons who set up the new current shall participate. Hence it is not in any sense a barren, unrewarded thing, for we ourselves come back again in some other age to reap the fruit of the seed we had sown. The impulse must be set up, and we must be willing to wait for the result. The potter's wheel continues to revolve when the potter has withdrawn his foot, and so the present revolving wheel will turn for a while until the impulse is spent.

Recollections of the Soul

Every soul brings a kind of sense with it into the world, whereby it tastes and relisheth what is suitable to its peculiar temper . . . What can we conclude but that the soul itself is the immediate subject of all this variety and that it came prejudiced and prepossessed into this body with some implicit notions that it had learnt in another? To say that all this variety proceeds primarily from the mere temper of our bodies is methinks a very poor and unsatisfying account. For those that are the most like in the temper, air, and complexion of their bodies, are yet of a vastly differing genius . . . What then can we conjecture is the cause of all this diversity, but that we had taken a great delight and pleasure in some things like and analogous unto these in a former condition?

—Joseph Glanvill

letters • questions • comment

Once a person sees what lesson is to be learned, or how a course of action should be changed, what makes change sometimes so difficult to bring about?

Perhaps the first thing that occurs is that there are several classes of mental, psychic and physical "lives" involved in the performance of any action, and the time and effort it takes to re-train the lives depends on how accommodating to change these forms of intelligence are. To what sort of direction do they respond? But the question goes deeper. External habits we are able to notice can be regarded as reflexes of subtler tendencies in the psychic nature. Any fundamental change must subject these to review, too. This task belongs to the Arjuna in each one, who in his moments of clear-seeing knows that he must engage the faculties of the mind with an impetus from a universal standpoint, instead of responding to stimuli from outside. Speaking of the complexity of these two kinds of perceptions in Letter Eleven of "Living the Life" in *The Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie says:

> The Self *only* eternally Is. Now what are all the rest? Perceptions, I think; some permanent, being related to the Self, or of the Self; others, perceptions of perceptions and impermanent in that they are in constant change. The two classes or bundles of perceptions in individuals would be Higher and Lower Mind. Perhaps Higher and Lower Self would be better, but no set terms can give anything but approximations of differences of perceptions. We may call what is perceived "matter," or "prakriti," that basis by which action may take place. It would seem that this basis is the general result of the interpretation, interblending, and interaction of the perceptions of multitudinous classes of beings.

This kind of clear-seeing requires means which have to be developed. It must have representation on every plane of human consciousness down to the most material, but its highest function would be unconfined by the sense of separateness which usually interprets the perceptions of ordinary consciousness.

These "organs" of perception, making possible the versatility of

the dancer or the minute observation of the artist, belong to everyone, but are capable of much greater application and use. It is the perfection of concentration that makes the full expression of all these powers possible. To bring about significant changes, then, would mean that the individual learns to give appropriate and undivided attention to every act which needs to be done. In this way he trains all his faculties to be responsive to the will. When his instruments are thus made into *his* powers, and not semi-autonomous centers of action which often go their own way, instead of his, even the most trivial experiences of daily life may be made to yield a harvest of experience rich in significance.

According to Theosophical teachings, a part of the natural process of evolution is a two-fold incarnation, related to the dual nature of mind. There is first the desire to know, that is, the original resolve to incarnate in order to gain experience and to learn. But there is also a second involvement. So long as the lessons to be learned are recognized and understood only in part, embodied existence generates its own range of purposes and pleasures by reason of our association with the matter we are engaged in understanding and refining. This attraction—called the *Mahamaya* of the external world—becomes attachment to all its forms until we learn, by striving through it for self-knowledge, the difference between the permanent and the transitory. In view of man's enormous past, and the resulting Karma produced by creating and reaping the effects of our multiple perceptions, and our "perceptions of perceptions," the evolutionary task can hardly be easy.

In his article, "Meditation, Concentration, Will," Mr. Judge describes the natural direction of psychological development consciously undertaken. Concentration from this broad base may bring about changes which, though initially difficult to effect, are far-reaching and lasting. He says:

> In the way we divided meditation into two great sorts, so we can divide concentration. One is the use of an already acquired power on a fixed occasion, the other the deep and constant practice of a power that has been made a possession. Concentration is not memory, since the latter is known to act without our concentrating on anything, and we know that centuries ago the old thinkers very justly called memory a phantasy. But by reason of a peculiarity of the human mind the associative part of memory is waked up the very instant concentration is at-

tempted. It is this that makes students weary and at last drives them away from the pursuit of concentration. A man sits down to concentrate on the highest idea he can formulate, and like a flash troops of recollections of all sorts of affairs, old thoughts and impressions come before his mind, driving away the great object he first selected, and concentration is at an end.

This trouble is only to be corrected by practice, by assiduity, by continuance. No strange and complicated directions are needed. All we have to do is to try and to keep on trying.

Further:

No mere practice will develop will *per se*, for it exists forever, fully developed in itself. But practice will develop in us the power to call on that will which is ours. Will and Desire lie at the doors of Meditation and Concentration. If we desire truth with the same intensity that we had formerly wished for success, money, or gratification, we will speedily acquire meditation and possess concentration. If we do all our acts, small and great, every moment, for the sake of the whole human race, as representing the Supreme Self, then every cell and fibre of the body and inner man will be turned in one direction, resulting in perfect concentration. This is expressed in the New Testament in the statement that if the eye is single the whole body will be full of light, and in the Bhagavad-Gita it is still more clearly and comprehensively given through the different chapters. In one it is beautifully put as the lighting up in us of the Supreme One, who then becomes visible. Let us meditate on that which is in us as the Highest Self, concentrate upon it, and will to work for it as dwelling in every human heart.

"THE HIGHEST OF ARTS"

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of a man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavour. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

TWO SYSTEMS—OF LUST AND SORROW

THE great Buddha referred to two systems for the government of life which he said were each ignoble, and one both ignoble and evil. One is the System of Lust, which is devotion to the enervating pleasures of sense; it was said by him to be vile, vulgar, unsound, ignominious, and productive of evil. Yet it is that which governs the lives of most people in these days.

The other extreme is the System of Sorrow. It consists of mortification of the flesh and of self torture in order to acquire knowledge and powers. This was extensively practised by Hindu ascetics in Buddha's time, and is today pursued to some extent. The Indian books are full of stories of the great powers over nature acquired by saints through the practice of austerities. Not ten years ago there died in India a certain Swami—or holy man—who was known as the Swami of Akalkot. He did many wonderful things, and nearly all of them known to young and old in India today. His powers were obtained through the use of the System of Sorrow. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* this practice is spoken of by Krishna, who declares that it is not the best method, although productive of great results.

Both of these systems were known practically to Gautama. As the Prince Siddhartha, he was surrounded by his father's order with every luxury to tempt the senses. There were gardens, flowers, jewels, music, animals, servants, and the most beautiful women. There are so many stories told of the magnificent things collected about him that we must infer for his youth a complete realisation of the System of Lust, or sensation, even if it was of the finer and more noble quality. This at last, pleased him not, and he entered on the practice of the System of Sorrow, which he declared, after he had obtained Nirvana, to be ignoble and unworthy of a true man. This he continued in until he had tried all the varieties. It was then that he decided on the middle path from which comes attainment to truth and Nirvana.

It is a well-known doctrine in the occult lodges of India that

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the same result can be obtained in two ways, by one extreme or the other. But in order to reach the end in those ways, great power is required,—more power than men in general possess. The reason is that, from the action of a law which may be roughly called The Law of Tendency, the extreme practice warps the being in such a manner that success is prevented. So, when one follows the System of Sorrow, he will indeed acquire great powers, such as those possessed by Viswamitra, Vasishta, and others, but with the greater number of cases it will all end at last in confusion.

The System of Lust has the same end and with no exception. For its tendency being downward, an impulse is set up that sends the man lower and lower with no hope of salvation.

In pursuing the middle course—that of moderation—Buddha did not ignore any department of his nature, for he says, "By five means have I seen these truths,—by the mental eye, by understanding, by wisdom, by science, and by intuition." Herein he agrees with the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which tells us not to eat too much nor too little, not to oversleep nor to refuse proper sleep. Krishna says further, "Do necessary acts, ever remembering me. Fix your mind on me. Treat every creature as my tabernacle. This is the best devotion. In this path there is no ruggedness, no defeat."

The System of Moderation, then, is the best, for it clears the inner eye and strengthens every part of the nature. Theosophists, whether they are Buddhists or not, should remember this. Some are inclined to pursue an extreme course in one direction or another. Some say that the mental powers only are to be developed; others ignore those and claim that the spiritual alone should have attention. The latter err as well as the former. It is true that the spirit is the greater. But it is also true that the mental plane and powers cannot be obliterated unless we obliterate the Universe in the Night of Brahma. If we do not use the mental eye as Buddha directs, some day we will meet on the mental plane a new experience for which we are unprepared, and defeat shall be our portion. The true practice would prevent this. There are numerous instances of such disasters being thus caused. Ascetics of extraordinary powers have been brought into sin and contempt through experiences which were new to them because they lived forever on a plane where others of a different sort had place. It is only when

salvation has been obtained that we can hope to be above the influence of all Karma.

Such is the Law * * *
The heart of it is love; the end of it
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey!

A BUDDHIST

A BROTHERHOOD IN FACT

There were Theosophists before the Christian era, notwithstanding that the Christian writers ascribe the development of the Eclectic theosophical system to the early part of the third century of their Era. Diogenes Laertius traces Theosophy to an epoch antedating the dynasty of the Ptolemies; and names as its founder an Egyptian Hierophant called Pot-Amun, the name being Coptic and signifying a priest consecrated to Amun, the god of Wisdom. But history shows it revived by Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the Neo-Platonic School. He and his disciples called themselves "Philalethians"—lovers of the truth; while others termed them the "Analogists," on account of their method of interpreting all sacred legends, symbolical myths and mysteries, by a rule of analogy or correspondence, so that events which had occurred in the external world were regarded as expressing operations and experiences of the human soul. It was the aim and purpose of Ammonius to reconcile all sects, peoples and nations under one common faith—a belief in one Supreme Eternal, Unknown, and Unnamed Power, governing the Universe by immutable and eternal laws. His object was to prove a primitive system of Theosophy, which at the beginning was essentially alike in all countries; to induce all men to lay aside their strifes and quarrels, and unite in purpose and thought as the children of one common mother; to purify the ancient religions, by degrees corrupted and obscured, from all dross of human element, by uniting and expounding them upon pure philosophical principles.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

OF STUDYING THEOSOPHY

IT is often asked: How should I or my friend study Theosophy? In beginning this study a series of "don'ts" should first engage the student's attention. Don't imagine that you know everything, or that any man in scientific circles has uttered the last word on any subject; don't suppose that the present day is the best, or that the ancients were superstitious, with no knowledge of natural laws. Don't forget that arts, sciences, and metaphysics did not have their rise with European civilization; and don't forget that the influence of Socrates, Plato, and Artistotle of ancient Greece is still imposed upon the modern mind. Don't think that our astronomers would have made anything but a mess of the zodiac if the old Chaldeans had not left us the one we use. Don't forget that it is easy to prove that civilization of the highest order has periodically rolled around this globe and left traces great and small behind. Don't confuse Buddhism with Brahmanism, or imagine that the Hindus are Buddhists; and don't take the word of English or German Sanscrit scholars in explanation of the writings and scriptures of eastern nations whose thoughts are as foreign in their form to ours as our countries are. One should first be prepared to examine with a clear unbiased mind.

But suppose the enquirer is disposed at the outset to take the word of theosophical writers, then caution is just as necessary, for theosophical literature does not bear the stamp of authority. We should all be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us, and we cannot do that if we have swallowed without study the words of others.

But what is study? It is not the mere reading of books, but rather long, earnest, careful thought upon that which we have taken up. If a student accepts reincarnation and karma as true doctrine, the work is but begun. Many theosophists accept doctrines of that name, but are not able to say what it is they have accepted. They do not pause to find out what reincarnates, or how, when, or why

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karma has its effects, and often do not know what the word means. Some at first think that when they die they will reincarnate, without reflecting that it is the lower personal I they mean, which cannot be born again in a body. Others think that karma is—well, karma, with no clear idea of classes of karma, or whether or not it is punishment or reward or both. Hence a careful learning from one or two books of the statement of the doctrines, and then a more careful study of them, are absolutely necessary.

There is too little of such right study among theosophists, and too much reading of new books. No student can tell whether Mr. Sinnett in *Esoteric Buddhism* writes reasonably unless his book is learned and not merely skimmed. Although his style is clear, the matter treated is difficult, needing firm lodgment in the mind, followed by careful thought. A proper use of his book, *The Secret Doctrine, The Key to Theosophy,* and all other matter written upon the constitution of man, leads to an acquaintance with the doctrines as to the being most concerned, and only when that acquaintance is obtained is one fitted to understand the rest.

Another branch of study is that pursued by natural devotees, those who desire to enter into the work itself for the good of humanity. Those should study all branches of theosophical literature all the harder, in order to be able to clearly explain it to others, for a weak reasoner or an apparently credulous believer has not much weight with others.

Western theosophists need patience, determination, discrimination, and memory, if they ever intend to seize and hold the attention of the world for the doctrines they disseminate.

—William Brehon

on the lookout

In Defense of Human Rights

It has been a short step from administering drugs to prisoners to obtain a submissive conformity, to the use of prisons as experimental laboratories to test techniques for modifying human behavior (see Lookout for November). This trend, however, has finally attracted the attention of concerned citizens and legislators, who are now pressing for legislation to protect the rights of individuals confined in every kind of institution where medical treatment is involved. The *New York Times* (July 15) reports:

> Bills have been introduced in Congress to create new safeguards for a patient's rights, and a special committee at the National Institutes of Health is working to draft a broad range of new guidelines for the ethical pursuit of research.
>
> A three-judge panel in Michigan ruled last week that experimental brain surgery to change behavior could not be done on persons confined against their will in institutions.

Unhampered Research?

The *Times* says further:

> Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, recently introduced an amendment to the Public Health Service Act that would establish a commission for the protection of human subjects of bio-medical research in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.
>
> Although, at first glance, this would hardly seem to be controversial, the Administration opposes it. A spokesman for H.E.W. explained why last week in testimony before Senator Kennedy's Health subcommittee.
>
> Essentially, the Administration's argument is that guidelines must be flexible in order to protect human rights without unnecessarily hampering research.

In the case of persons institutionalized against their will, such as prisoners and many mental patients, drafting legislation that will serve both research and individual rights may prove quite difficult. There are ways of coercing persons to give "voluntary consent" to treatment which may not be to their liking, and might, indeed, be harmful in some undisclosed respect.

Multiplying Problems

On the other hand, the possibility of genuinely beneficial treatment, which might be defined as "experimental," should not be ignored. And the progress of research itself may complicate even issues previously decided on "ethical" grounds. The *Times* story gives an example of this, as reported by an official. It was for long a practice in institutions to give persons disposed to strokes anticoagulant drugs, as a means of making further strokes unlikely. Over a period of years "some evidence and a lot of opinion had accumulated to suggest that this anticoagulant was valuable to the patient." Its benefits, however, were doubted by some, and a study to test this treatment showed conclusively that "the drug treatment was not only of no value, but might actually be doing harm." In this way, the "ethics" of the situation, the *Times* suggests, was reversed. A treatment once regarded as unethical to withhold was now seen as quite possibly unethical to administer.

Where the Wrong Is Done

The illustration is apt enough from a conventional point of view, but the question is purely physiological, its decisions resting purely on medical knowledge and experience. As medical certainty becomes clear, the "ethical" question is automatically resolved. Yet there are much more difficult questions concerning the right of the individual to psychical integrity or privacy—questions on which there is no clear consensus comparable to that leading to decision about the coagulating agent. Moreover, it seems likely that the most important considerations in respect to persons held in custody of public agencies (such as prisons or mental hospitals) can be but superficially affected by either legislators or even high ranking administrators, since the lives of these confined people are most intimately ruled by guards in prisons and attendants in hospitals, not by high-ranking policy-makers. The general indifference of the public to the fate of these outcast citizens is really the deciding factor in how they are treated, regardless of periodic "reforms" in institutional administration. An aroused and alert public opinion in respect to these unfortunates could do much more in their behalf than even debates in Congress or state legislatures concerning the "rights" of inmates and any others whose lives are now more or less in the charge of socio-political decision.

Missing Elements

In the background of all such matters loom profound questions of Karma, the folly of all attempts at punishment, and the foundation of both mental and moral health in an idea of the self that is potent for self-reform, as well as for mental hygiene. Take for example the heavy "ethical" debates brought on by the present-day issue of abortion, turning, sometimes, on when actual "life" begins in the foetus. How different the values in this question, once the major postulate of a reincarnating ego, as the chief party concerned is laid down! So with the question of death, too, and the right of the soul to a natural and uninhibited departure from the body, uncomplicated by dark biochemical measures to imprison the spark of life in an organism that is already useless to its now enforced occupant. Some day, perhaps, we shall have educational institutions in which the question of laws, schools, and public institutions best suited to reincarnating egos and their needs will provide subjects for "research." Then the idea of the human being will be restored to its full dignity, and words like "Ethics" will be grounded in philosophic meaning.

Who Leads Whom?

The status of parapsychology is briefly surveyed by Nicholas Wade in *Science* (July 13), suggesting that it has achieved a certain acceptance among orthodox scientists as an appropriate subject for research, tempered, however, by liberal amounts of scepticism. In fact, the change from hostility to mere scepticism, he says, seems to have been prompted more by pressures from the popular culture than pure scientific interest. As the director of one foundation complained: "The changed attitude of the scientific community seems to be more related to change in popular interests than to reading our research reports." Mr. Wade writes:

> Despite more orthodox colleagues, and a lack of any very remarkable breakthrough in their own field, the parapsychologists have nonetheless persevered. There are about a score of fulltime researchers in the country, and many others who are involved part time or intermittently. The Parapsychological Association boasts more than 100 full members in this country and abroad, almost all of whom hold a Ph.D. or master's degree in a scientific subject. To talk with, parapsychologists are serious and sober men, not obviously different from other scientists except that their belief in extrasensory perception

(ESP) places them beyond the pale of ordinary scientific discourse.

Influential Trends

He also says:

> The values of the counterculture have rendered outright hostility to parapsychology less fashionable. After many rebuffs, the parapsychology association was recently admitted into the ranks of the AAAS. The National Institute of Mental Health has recently awarded two grants for parapsychological research. Some 75 educational institutions throughout the country offer courses on parapsychology, many of which are for credit. And a larger public became aware of the scientific pursuit of ESP when lunar module pilot Captain Edgar D. Mitchell performed a card-guessing experiment during the voyage of Apollo 14.

The Basic Block Remains

Since the days of J. B. Rhine's work at Duke University the field has broadened to include the examination of mediums, poltergeists, evidence of reincarnation, and reports of alleged extracorporeal experiences. In general, Dr. Rhine concluded that these aspects of psychic research were not fruitful for scientific study because of the difficulty of obtaining objective proofs or repeatable experiments on demand. However, in a lecture in London in 1965, he spoke of the hard-core rejection by orthodox science of the idea of a non-physical world:

> Among the scientific professions of the Western world there has grown up a conviction that the universe is physical, and that anything that does not fit the physical picture is unreal and should be ignored if it cannot be disproved. . . . The natural result is a silent boycott of any unassimilable claim that arises, and this is the real opposition parapsychology has now to encounter.

But in the Future?

Mr. Wade adds:

> The climate is probably now more favorable than ever for parapsychologists to break the boycott and secure a fairer hearing for their claims. But there is probably some little way yet to go before parapsychology becomes assimilable into the realm of natural science.

The *Science* writer observes that part of the reason for the unwillingness of scientists to take psychical research seriously is the lack of any coherent theory of psychic phenomena. Even so, the

new tolerance in the scientific community might be taken as indication that in this century a rational explanation of these phenomena may be given a fair hearing. Something of a prediction of such an awakening is suggested by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 149):

> The whole issue of the quarrel between the profane and the esoteric sciences depends upon the belief in, and demonstration of, the existence of an astral body within the physical, the former independent of the latter. Paul d'Assier, the Positivist, seems to have proven the fact pretty plainly, not to speak of the accumulated testimony of the ages, and that of the modern spiritualists and mystics. It will be found difficult to reject this fact in our age of proofs, tests, and ocular demonstrations.

The Crucial Recognition

In view of the numerous experiments with psychogenic drugs as agents for controlling behavior, more is implied in H.P.B.'s statement concerning the astral body than admission of its existence. As the basis for the sense perception of the physical, the recorder of impressions from the inner man, and the actual seat of the physical organs, man's astral vehicle is now subject to extensive abuse. Scientific recognition of the psychic dynamics of this principle may be one of the steps prerequisite to appreciation of the relationship of the astral body to man as a spiritual being; indeed, if this is not a part of the growth in psychological knowledge of Western man, the discovery of more details of the psychic nature may lead only to a worse materialism than ever.

New-Old Practices

Further evidence of the need for arousing awareness of man's responsibilities as a mind-being appears with the growing interest in "yoga" and "meditation" as therapeutic practices now almost scientifically "respectable." The Ottawa *Citizen* reports that an Ottawa Rabbi has been given a grant by the Canadian government to investigate the possible advantage of replacing the use of drugs as a means of coping with modern pressures by training in such practices. The *Citizen* reports Rabbi Gerry Steinberg's views:

> Study into Yoga is serious scientific research, he said. Most major psychiatric foundations are looking into its uses and its values. "It's not a cultish thing. This is now an area of serious scientific investigation." The government should explore all ways that might help people to cope with life in the increasingly com-

plex world, he said. Yoga and meditation can do this and they deserve investigation.

The Question of Priorities

Such research has been a subject for investigation in some parts of the world for thousands of years. But repeated warnings by H.P.B. and Mr. Judge in Theosophical literature make it clear that the yoga practices of the sort readily available are no panacea for the very real tensions that exist in Western culture. They may, indeed, lull the mind with psychic euphoria, but remain unable to arouse the higher powers of mind. There were *reasons* for the priorities given to ethics, altruism, and personal moral discipline by H. P. Blavatsky. There is a yoga to be learned, and a meditation to be practiced, but never in separation from the philosophic and moral verities to which all desire for personal development, and even "spiritual" advancement, must be subordinate.

Yoga or Astral Confusion?

Meanwhile, the "new" behavior therapy, obtaining a rebirth in today's psychology, has crossed into the realm of "old" Hatha yoga. Simply stated, "behavior therapy" is a process of using "conditioning" to establish selected, desired behaviors. While behavioristic psychologists have long been content to condition animals, human subjects are preferred, particularly since it has been discovered that the autonomic nervous system (which controls blood pressure, respiration, etc.) and brain waves (electrical activity of the brain) can be "conditioned." It is understood, for example, that experimental studies are under way which will attempt to raise or lower the blood pressure through these procedures. The most recent stir, however, focuses around brain waves. These electrical rhythms of the brain have been associated with certain feeling states: *e.g.*, the alpha wave with an alert state devoid of tension; the beta wave with problem-solving behavior accompanied by worry or tension, etc. It is also now believed that certain "meditation states" have corresponding brainwave characteristics. For example, James Coleman (*Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*) points to a study by T. Hirai and A. Kasamatsu ("An Electroencephalographic Study of Zen Meditation") which appeared in a Japanese neurological journal in 1966. The investigators, it is said, established—

> a high correlation between brain wave control and the proficiency rating of Zen masters. During meditation, the EEG

(brain-wave recording) of Zen masters showed prominent alpha activity. Those with 20 years or more of Zen practice also showed prolonged patterns of theta activity—the theta waves having a rhythm of only 5 to 7 cycles per second.

The Quick, "Electronic" Way

To be able to develop "mind expansion," without the twenty years of meditation, is one of the plums sought after. The idea is that, with electronically sensitive apparatus, the brain waves can be controlled through conditioning—hence, "electronic yoga," the quick and easy way! No matter if it is backwards—it still might work.

Some, however, seem to recognize that we may be technologically jumping off into unknown regions without benefit of knowing what we are about (specifically, without benefit of man's higher principles). In a recent article appearing in the American Psychological Association's *APA Monitor* (April, 1973), statements are quoted from Dr. Elmer Green who is director of the psychophysiology laboratory at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas. Speaking in general of the activities of the "mind controllers," he asks:

> Is it realistic to accept the assurances of commercial mind-training instructors that dangers that may be associated with "territorial invasion" by humans on "astral" levels are not possible? . . . Is it safe to assume that only good, nice, and safe beings (like humans?) are functioning in "astral" dimensions?

H.P.B.'s mission, in part, she said, was to stem the tide of the muddy torrents of Kama Loka pouring forth from ten thousand séance halls. Could a major cleansing task during the coming cycle be to stem the "mind controllers"? One begins to understand more of the symbolism of the labors of Hercules from such prospects.

The Isolated Young

Appealing for more support of international student organizations, Harold Taylor (*World,* July 17) describes the insularity that develops in students who never exchange social and political ideas with students in foreign countries:

> Never before have so many members of the American student body been more conscious of the United States in world affairs or more aware of world problems, from racism and

poverty to war and planetary pollution. The mass media and the Vietnam war have seen to that. Yet this is also a time when an extreme parochialism affects many American students in terms of their attitude toward world affairs and their knowledge of the lives and problems of people in other countries. They are absorbed in the American consciousness, a consciousness of America in the world and of themselves in relation to America. As a result, politically minded students tend to over-simplify the world order by blaming the United States and the major powers for perpetuating the problems. The students assume that they are caused by institutions and forces that serve the interests of those in power and that students and citizens in general can exert no influence on them.

Anger, but no Rebuilding

Criticism, mixed with impotence, he says further, turns into mere *reaction,* which is not productive of creative actions:

> "Institutional racism," "structural violence," "the war machine," and "American imperialism" are terms students have learned to use as a vocabulary of criticism, not as analytic instruments for understanding the process by which racism, mass violence, and economic exploitation have come to exist.
>
> Underneath it all is a pervasive anti-institutionalism. To be against institutions of all kinds—whether the United Nations, public schools, or marriage—is to gain a certain status as a nonconformist while, at the same time, having a perpetual, all-purpose alibi. Then whatever happens to oneself, one's friends, and humanity in general becomes the result of bureaucratization in a huge, inhumane society and world order that crush the individual: It is "they" who are doing it to "us." The options, as some students see them, are either to move out of the reach of bureaucracies, into sheltered places, or to remain in society while raising the level of denunciation.

Vital Contact and Exchange

Contributing to this sense of powerlessness, Mr. Taylor says, is the wholly inadequate instruction in international affairs obtained in American classrooms: "We need to get rid of the idea that we have taught students to understand world affairs when we have fitted them up with a set of abstractions." Mr. Taylor would replace the frustration of being ill-informed and ignorant of desirable alternatives with opportunities for active collaboration between American students and students of other countries. This could take the form of common projects in the arts and community service, as well as joint study and action on problems in educa-

tion and social change. It seems obvious that opportunity to broaden perspectives through personal contact and to develop solutions as a result of the free exchange of ideas would be an effective antidote to the apathy and growing dissatisfaction of American students.

A Curious Opinion of Buddhism

The review of a new book, Arthur Danto's *Mysticism and Morality*, by Todd Gitlin, once a New Lefter, in the *Nation* for Sept. 17, provides a depressing spectacle of what happens to Eastern metaphysics and philosophy when filtered through the several transforming agencies of traditional popular belief, a Western scholar's criticism, and a reviewer's attempt to set his readers straight. The claim of the author, if we can trust the *Nation* critic, is that the ethics or moral rules of Buddhism can be detached from the dynamics or techniques of "salvation," which, Danto says, is to be obtained, not by a transformation of the world —making it over, one supposes, into a good place—but by "a transformation of the vision of ourselves and our relation to the world." If we can rid ourselves of our sense of separateness, identifying with the One which is the reality behind all, we attain Nirvana. But from this, he says, we can see "that the demands of salvation and the demands of morality are not automatically and simultaneously fulfilled, and they may be even antithetical." Danto admits and urges that the rules for moral behavior are there, but he maintains that they are not "internal to the theory of Buddhism." Apparently, he has not heard of the Kwan Yin commitment to labor unceasingly for the salvation of every creature and all that lives.

Of the Gita, and Taoism, Too

A similar denigrating judgment is applied to the *Gita*. The directives of Karma-Yoga, which counsel impersonality, are said "to neutralize the moral qualities of one's actions by making the actions *not yours*." Taoism suffers reduction for the same reason. "Taoism seems to dissolve any relations we may have to one another to replace them with the relationship we have to the universe at large." Gitlin thinks that Danto thinks that morality, in Eastern religious teaching, is something "added on," and not intrinsic to the philosophy at all. In this book, and also in the

review, mystical religion seems interpreted entirely as some sort of spiritual "technology," with the goal limited to the objective of the "selfish" Buddha, who completes his contract with the universe —does his personal allotment of illusion-breaking—and goes off by himself to enjoy his reward. In this view, you don't try to reduce evil, but leave it strictly alone, seeking the "holy reality" behind all appearance. Fortunately, at the end of his review, Todd Gitlin suggests that Mr. Danto has over-simplified, as indeed he has, almost beyond restoration. Apart from the fact that the author seems to have examined only Theravada orthodoxy as representative of Buddhism, he has turned the ideas chosen for criticism into intellectual abstractions, separate from practice, and manipulated them by a narrow logic until they accomplish a kind of moral self-destruction.

Other Possibilities

Mr. Gitlin seems aware that religious ideas seldom work out this way in life. He says that to recognize the inherent unity behind the world should not lead to neglect of the world's need to be made a better place. "One can," he remarks, "with Neruda, for example, accept the world as sanctified and also as needing to be changed; one can accept one's responsibility to others and understand the limits of what one can do at the same time." He also provides this comment in the last paragraph of the review:

> Where—as Danto points out—in the Eastern orthodoxies the responsibility of one person to the other person is supplanted by the responsibility of the person to an undifferentiated universe, those orthodoxies are in need of revision. Where they are capable of revision in fact—as in the case of the Vietnamese Buddhists—they are capable of revision in theory. Unfortunately, too many bewildered, fast-plunging Americans take from the East an evasion of ethics, an easy way out of what is valid in Western thinking. Hastening after gurus, they evade when they think they are transcending.

It seems a pity that the rather mechanistic version of Karma this book and the review provide will probably be accepted by *Nation* readers as in general the substance of what the teaching of Karma implies. The idea of an enduring Ego is not mentioned, of course, since Buddhism is believed to rule it out as the most persistent of all illusions.

Contrast or Help Is Needed

Nevertheless, "transmigration of souls or selves" is referred to, and Karma explained as the "residue of past lives in the present one"—making the "moral mechanics" of our present situation and degree of "happiness." A kind of flip intellectuality pervades the discussion, as though the questions considered could be settled by a deft flick of one's intellectual wrist. We should not have noticed this book, save for Mr. Gitlin's praise of it as an "exposition of the rudiments of Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism" which is "the clearest brief introduction I've read." Well, religions are not Theosophy, and orthodoxies are not really religion. But if the mood in which a better-informed contemporary thinker discusses these matters is important for contrast with the temper revealed by this review, one might turn to S. Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy*, noting in particular what he has to say about the Upanishads and about Buddhism. Serious inquirers into Theosophy will of course go to *The Secret Doctrine* and the *Theosophical Glossary* to get matters straight; we mention Radhakrishnan's work as easily available as well as highly acceptable to scholars.

Freedom from "Shots"

"Your Right to Refuse Immunization in International Travel," a pamphlet issued by the National Health Federation (P.O. Box 686, Monrovia, Calif. 91016), affords information on the regulations governing inoculations for those leaving and returning to this country. U.S. federal law specifically provides alternatives to those not desiring vaccination. These alternatives, involving periodic examinations or, occasionally, quarantine, are seldom required and, when applied, have been carried out with a minimum of inconvenience. Although overzealous officials may occasionally urge the traveller to submit to vaccination, submission cannot be required. The Federation is working toward a departure and readmission procedure which would encourage complete neutrality on the part of officials (perhaps presenting the tourist with a leaflet listing the pros and cons of vaccination together with the regulations applying in either case). The pamphlet also notes that, although there are occasional increases in cases of communicable diseases in some parts of the world, improved sanitation and medical care are reducing the force of arguments for immunization.